

Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



STATE OF ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT OF LAW
1275 W. WASHINGTON STREET
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007-2926
WWW.AZAG.GOV

ANDREA M. ESQUER
PRESS SECRETARY
PHONE: (602) 542-8019
CELL PHONE: (602) 725-2200

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Terry Goddard Urges Congress to Reconsider Crime Victims Funding Cuts

(Phoenix, Ariz. – April 12, 2005) Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard today expressed his concerns about a proposed budget cut of more than \$1.2 billion from the Federal Crime Victims Fund used to provide direct assistance to victims of violent crimes. Goddard joined the Attorneys General from all 50 states and Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands.

“The Administration’s proposal for the FY 2006 budget to remove \$1.27 billion from the Crime Victims Fund would have a devastating impact on our ability to support victims of crime,” the Attorneys General said in their letter to Congressional leadership.

The Federal Crime Victims Fund was created by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA). VOCA funds come entirely from collections from federal criminal fines, forfeitures and special assessments – not from taxpayers. Through grants to state victim compensation programs, victims of violent crimes throughout the country have been able to get help for medical care, mental health counseling, funeral expenses, and other vital services.

In Arizona a number of programs would be severely impacted by these cuts. They include the 24-hour hotlines set up to help victims of sexual assault, Childhelp USA’s Mobile Center of Northern Arizona, a mobile advocacy center serving residents in rural areas, victim compensation that pays for medical bills, counseling, and lost wages when there are no other sources to cover these types of expenses, and domestic violence advocates and restitution advocates housed in county attorney’s offices throughout Arizona.

“Some 4,400 local programs depend on VOCA assistance grants to provide necessary services to nearly four million victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, drunk driving, elder abuse and robberies, as well as families of homicide victims and other victims of crime,” said the Attorneys General letter to Congress. “VOCA is the only federal grant program that supports direct assistance services to victims of every description.”

The letter to Congress coincides with National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 10-16. The Attorneys General asked Congress to protect funding for vital crime victim services and assure the future availability of these monies to the Crime Victims Fund.

The VOCA Crime Victims Fund is administered by the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) in the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Justice Programs. Although the Administration's proposed federal budget includes VOCA funding of \$650 million for fiscal year 2006, all other monies remaining in the fund and any new monies collected in fiscal year 2006 would be eliminated. As a result, starting in 2007, there would be no money readily available for state victim assistance programs, crime victim compensation grants, or for federal personnel who provide victim services.

"The proposed cut could not come at a worse time for states and territories that are facing significant budget problems," the letter said. "Victims should not be further burdened by having to pay for such services themselves, or worse, forced to go without them."

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